10.

# A SERMON

Preached before the

# KING,

*February* the 15. 168$\frac{3}{4}$.

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# Job xxiii. 15.

## *When I conſider, I am afraid of him.*

THeſe Words were ſpoken by *Job*; not in his flouriſhing and proſperous ſtate, when that extraordinary character was given of him, *That there was none like him in the Earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feared God, and eſchewed evil*; but, after the Devil was permitted to try that malicious experiment upon him, *viz.* whether the changing his outward condition, would not alter the inward diſpoſition of his mind, as to God and Religion. For he ſuggeſted, that nothing but intereſt made him ſo religious, that all his Piety and Devotion was owing to the wonderful bleſſings of God upon him; and if theſe were once removed, he would fly out into ſo much impatience as *to curſe God to his face*; *i. e.*

Job 1. 8. 2. 3.

1. 9.

11.

to ſpeak evil of his Providence, and renounce his ſervice. And this temptation prevailed ſo far on *Job*'s Wife, that ſhe became an Inſtrument to carry on the Devils deſign, when ſhe ſaid to him, *Doſt thou ſtill retain thy integrity? Curſe God and dye*: As though ſhe had ſaid, "You ſee, "what all your Religion is now come to, and "what a condition the Providence of God, on "which you truſted ſo much, hath brought "you to; let them ſerve God, that have eaſe "and plenty, you have nothing left to do "now, but in ſpite of Providence, to put an "end to ſuch a miſerable life. But as it was obſerved of the old Heathen Oracles, that they had often a true meaning in them, but it was commonly miſapplied (the Devils own knowledge of future events being but probable and conjectural) ſo here, it was a ſhrewd gueſs that ſo ſudden a change would have ſuch an effect upon ſome perſon concerned in it: But he was very much miſtaken as to *Job*; who behaved himſelf with admirable patience and ſubmiſſion to the Will of God, under all his ſevere afflictions; inſomuch, that he did not ſuffer an indecent expreſſion to come from him, with reſpect to God and his Providence: *In all this Job ſinned not, nor charged God fooliſhly.*

Job 2. 9.

Job 1. 22. 2. 10.

Which was no doubt a great diſappointment

to

to the Devil, who made account he ſhould by *Jobs* impatience have given a terrible blow to Religion, by making the World believe, that it was nothing but a grave pretence of ſome mens ſeeming to be better than their Neighbours. For if a man of ſo much Piety, as *Job* was eſteemed, ſhould no ſooner be pinched himſelf with affliction, but he would be quarrelling at Gods management of things, the Devil would have inferred, that he did plainly diſcover, how little influence, Religion had upon the minds of thoſe, who made the greateſt ſhew of it.

This had been a very dangerous ſnare in that Age, to the reſt of mankind, among whom the example of ſo great a Perſon, as *Job* was in the parts of *Arabia* where he lived (as appears by the *Sabæans* and *Chaldæans* his unkind Neigbours) did give a mighty reputation to the practice of Religion, eſpecially among ſuch a wild and ungoverned People as the *Arabs* were. And in truth, the World is never ſo kind to Religion, to give a fair interpretation of the failings of thoſe who pretend to it; but how unreaſonable ſoever it be, they will make Religion bear the blame of all their miſcarriages who wear its livery. And *Job* himſelf tells us, there were ſuch profane Perſons then in the World, who deſpiſed and contemned all Religion, as a vain impertinent,

Job 1. 15, 17.

21. 14, 15.

pertinent, inſignificant thing, *Therefore they ſay unto God, Depart from us; for we deſire not the knowledge of thy ways. What is the Almighty that we ſhould ſerve him? And what profit ſhall we have if we pray unto him?* i. e. they underſtood or valued nothing but what made for their preſent intereſt; and they were content to let God alone with the diſpoſal of another World, ſo they might ſecure this to themſelves. But it was not only then a ſeaſonable vindication of Religion, that *Job* behaved himſelf with ſo much patience under his great calamities; but it continues ſo to be as long as the memory of his ſufferings remains, which hath laſted for ſo many Ages, that ſome think the Book of *Job* the oldeſt Book in the World; (not in the ſuppoſed tranſlation into Hebrew, but in the Original *Arabic* or *Syriac*) and is now like to be preſerved, as long as the Chriſtian Church endures; againſt which *the Gates of Hell will never be able to prevail.*

But notwithſtanding the general evenneſs of *Job*'s temper, and his quiet ſubmiſſion to Divine Providence, there were two things which touched him more ſenſibly than all the other circumſtances of his afflictions; and thoſe were,

(1.) That God ſhould ſeem ſo much diſpleaſed with him, as to ſingle him out *as a mark to ſhoot at*, when he was not conſcious to himſelf

ſelf of any ſuch impiety to deſerve it, according to the common method of his Providence.

(2.) That his Friends ſhould call in queſtion his ſincerity in Religion, and ſuſpect him guilty of Hypocriſie and ſecret Impiety; becauſe they concluded that ſuch ſignal calamities could hardly fall upon any man, that was not guilty of ſome ſuch great crime towards God.

Theſe were a trial of *Jobs* patience indeed; that thoſe from whom he expected the greateſt comfort, ſhould prove his ſoreſt Enemies; for if God were angry, who could ſtand before him? and if he were falſe in his Religion, how could he expect he ſhould be his Friend? But in anſwer to both theſe, he owns his fear of Gods diſpleaſure, and denies the charge as to his ſecret Hypocriſie, and both in theſe few words of the Text, *When I conſider, I am afraid of him.*

Theſe words may be underſtood,

I. With reſpect to his apprehenſion of Gods diſpleaſure againſt him, *Therefore am I troubled at his preſence*, ſaith he immediately before; not as though *Job* were like thoſe, *Eliphaz* ſpeaks of in the foregoing Chapter, *which ſaid unto God, Depart from us*; or that he endeavoured, as profane Perſons do, to keep God out of his thoughts as much as he could: for what could *Job* have 22. 17.

done

done under all his Troubles but for Gods presence to support him? And therefore he declares his firm resolution never to let go his confidence in God whatever became of him; *Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him. He also shall be my salvation; for an hypocrite shall not come before him.* Job 13. 15, 16. But the *Presence* which troubled him, was the great appearance of Gods displeasure; of which again he speaks v. 24. *For God maketh my heart soft, and the Almighty troubleth me.* As though he had said, "All other considerations make no "deep impression upon my mind; but I am no "more able to bear up under the sense of Gods "anger, than the Wax is to forbear melting be-"fore the Fire. And from this sense of his own utter inability to stand before the Power of the Almighty, he elsewhere argues thus with him; *Wilt thou break a leaf driven to and fro? And wilt thou pursue the dry stubble?* 13. 25. Man being as unable to resist the Divine Power, as a leaf is to stand before a tempestuous Wind, or the dry Stubble to stop the rage of a consuming Fire.

But here are two things to be resolved to make this matter clear before I proceed;

(1.) What it was made *Job* so afraid of God *when he considered*, seeing he insists so much upon his own Integrity?

(2.) What apprehensions then ought we to have

have of God in our minds, when ſuch a one as *Job* ſaid, *When I conſider, I am afraid of him.*

(1.) What it was made *Job* ſo apprehenſive of Gods anger that *he was afraid of him*, when he pleads ſo much for his own Integrity towards God and Man? Doth not this ſeem to leſſen the comfort and ſatisfaction of a good Conſcience, when ſuch a one as *Job was afraid of God*? For, from whence comes all the peace of a good Conſcience, but from him? and what content can there be from him, the very thoughts of whom make us afraid? To that I anſwer,

(1.) Mankind ought always to preſerve an humble and awful apprehenſion of God in their mind. And that from the ſenſe of the infinite diſtance between God and us; as he is our Maker, and we are his Creatures; as he is our Benefactor, and we his Dependents; as he is our ſupreme Lord, and we his Subjects; as he infinitely exceeds us in all the Perfections of his Nature. For, what are our ſhallow and dark and confuſed conceptions of things, to his Divine Wiſdom? by which he comprehends all the differences of times at one view; and all the Reaſons and Connexions and Poſſibilities of things are *open and naked before him.* What is all the power of Mankind, if it were gathered into one, in compariſon with that Divine Power,

which gave a Being to the World, when it was not; and rules, and governs, and orders all things in it, with greater eaſe than we can move
Job 37. 18, a finger? It is by that, God *hath ſpread out the*
26. 12, 7. 16. *Skies, and ballanced the Clouds, and garniſhed the Heavens, and divided the Sea, and hanged the Earth upon nothing*; as it is elegantly ſet forth in this Book of *Job*. And therefore as *Job* ſaith to his Friends,
13. 11. *Shall not his excellency make you afraid? and his dread*
37. 22. *fall upon you?* For as *Elihu* ſpeaks, *With God is terrible Majeſty*: and therefore *when we conſider*, we have reaſon *to be afraid of him.*

(2.) The beſt of Mankind have guilt enough upon them to make them apprehend Gods diſpleaſure under great afflictions. *Jobs* Friends inſiſt much upon this, that God may ſee juſt cauſe to lay great puniſhments upon Men, although they may not ſee it in themſelves. For, *if he*
4. 18. *charges his Angels with folly*, as *Eliphaz* ſpeaks, *and*
15. 15. 16. *the Heavens are not clean in his ſight*; *How much more abominable and filthy is man, which drinketh iniquity like water? i. e.* whoſe natural propenſity to evil, is like that of the thirſty Traveller to drink of the Brook that he meets in his way. But ſuppoſe ſome to have much greater care to reſtrain
14. their deſires than others; yet ſaith he, *What is man, that he ſhould be clean? and he which is born of a woman, that he ſhould be righteous? i. e.* to ſuch a degree as

not

not to deſerve afflictions from God. And after all the proteſtations *Job* makes of his Integrity, he confeſſes, that there is ſo much natural and contracted impurity in Mankind, that God may juſtly caſt them into the Furnace to purge and refine them. *Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? not one.* And, *I have ſinned, what ſhall I do unto thee, O thou preſerver of men? For, thou writeſt bitter things againſt me, and makeſt me poſſeſs the iniquities of my youth.* He could not deny but he had ſinned enough to deſerve Gods diſpleaſure: but according to the uſual method of Providence, he could not but think his Caſe very hard, to ſuffer ſo much for ſins committed before he well knew the nature or danger of his ſins; for ſins ſo long ſince repented of, and forſaken (which is the only ſatisfactory ſign of true repentance) and when ſo many wicked men in the heighth of their impiety, and contempt of God and Religion, go away here unpuniſhed; whereas he had made it his buſineſs and delight to ſerve him, as he ſpeaks in this Chapter, *My foot hath held his ſteps, his way have I kept and not declined; neither have I gone back from the commandment of his lips: I have eſteemed the words of his mouth, more than my neceſſary food.* But after all this, to find Gods hand ſo heavy upon him, made him ſometimes complain *in the anguiſh and bitterneſs of his Soul; Why haſt thou ſet me as a mark*

Job 14. 4. 7. 20. 13. 26. 23. 11. 12. 7. 11. 20.

*againſt thee, ſo that I am a burden to my ſelf?* And elſe-
Job 16. 12. where, *I was at eaſe, he hath broken me aſunder; he hath alſo taken me by my neck, and ſhaken me to pieces, and ſet me up for his mark.* Nothing ſunk his ſpirit, till he thought God was diſpleaſed with him; and then his heart and courage failed him; and he beg'd compaſſion from his hard-hearted Friends,
19. 21. *Have pity upon me, have pity upon me, O ye my friends: for the hand of God hath touched me.* Which makes
Prov. 18. good the obſervation of the Wiſe Man, *That the*
14. *ſpirit of a man will ſuſtain his infirmities; i. e.* a Mans natural courage will carry him through a great many troubles, *but a wounded ſpirit who can bear? i. e.* when a Mans heart fails him, he becomes a burden to himſelf; every thing adds to his trouble, and nothing can give him eaſe but what can revive his Spirit. Now, no conſideration in the World doth ſo break in pieces and confound and ſhatter the Spirit of a Man, like the apprehenſion of Gods wrath and diſpleaſure againſt him for his ſins; which made *Job* cry out, like one wounded in the moſt tender and incu-
6. 4. rable parts, *The arrows of the Almighty are within me, the poiſon whereof drinketh up my ſpirit; the terrors of God do ſet themſelves in array againſt me.*

But after all this,

(3.) God may not be ſo diſpleaſed with ſuch Perſons as lie under great afflictions, as they apprehend

prehend him to be. And this was the truth of *Job*'s Caſe; his ſufferings were extraordinary, and ſuch an unuſal concurrence of ſo many ſad accidents, made him think he had great cauſe to apprehend an immediate hand of God to be ſtretcht out againſt him. But the main deſign of this Book, is to ſhew that all theſe afflictions were intended only as trials of his Patience, and that God never loved him better than at this time, when he thought him ſo much diſpleaſed with him; as he ſhewed in the Concluſion. This is a very hard thing for perſons under great afflictions to believe, and it is not neceſſary they ſhould; nay, ſometimes the apprehenſion of Gods diſpleaſure againſt them for their ſins, is one of the moſt uſeful parts of afflictions: for without this, they are apt either to inflame Mens minds with diſcontent and unruly paſſions; or to ſtupefie them with the dull and heavy *Opiates* of *Chance* or *Neceſſity*: but when afflictions are looked on as coming from Gods hand, this rouſes and awakens our minds, and makes us think it neceſſary to look about us, to ſearch and examine our ways, to find out the particular ſins we have given way to, which may have juſtly provoked God to ſhew his diſpleaſure againſt us. As we have reaſon above all things, to be afraid of his anger; ſo it is our

Wiſdom

Wiſdom to apprehend the leaſt change of his Countenance towards us, and to make our Peace with him, and then we have no cauſe to fear any thing that may happen to us: For the Wiſe God will then turn all our Croſſes into ſuch proper Remedies for the Diſeaſes of our Minds, that the ſharpeſt afflictions will tend more to the purging away our ſins, and thereby to a more ſound and healthful ſtate of our Souls, than all the ſleeping Potions of the intoxicating pleaſures and vanities of this World would ever have done. For, Luxury and Epicuriſm, with all the arts of heightning the Pleaſures of Life, are things not more delightful to ſenſe than dangerous to Mens Souls. They are like too frequent uſe of Spirits in a time of health, which weaken the force of Nature by raiſing it too high. So that were it in the choice of a wiſe Man to have and enjoy as much of this World as he pleaſed, he would ſee a neceſſity to reſtrain his appetite, and to deny himſelf ſome of the lawful Pleaſures of Life; were it only to keep up the reliſh by variety; and by enjoying them leſs, to hope to enjoy them longer. We have certainly then no reaſon to complain, if God think fit to debar us at all times, any uſe of unlawful Pleaſures, and an inordinate uſe of any; ſince he leaves ſcope enough for the true contentment

tentment of Life; and if at ſome times he judges it neceſſary to give us Phyſick as well as Food, ſhall we not ſubmit to his Will? For as *Job* ſaith, *Shall we receive good at the hand of God, and ſhall we not receive evil?* as if he had ſaid, "Shall we "think much that *our Father* ſhould be our *Phyſi-* "*cian*; that he who hath been hitherto ſo kind "to us to pleaſe us, ſhould now be ſo kind to "undertake our Cure? Shall we complain that "our *Phyſician* doth not humour our palates, "when he deſigns our health? God knows "what is better for us, than we do for our ſelves; "and that which ſeems moſt evil at preſent, "may turn to the greateſt good. I confeſs afterwards, *Job* being either ſowred by the malignity of his Diſtemper, or heated by the impertinency or bitterneſs of his Friends Diſcourſes (for if they had no relation to his Caſe, they were impertinent; if they had, they were ſevere and uncharitable) doth break out ſometimes into ſome expreſſions of impatience; but theſe aroſe from the Clouds upon his mind, which made him then apprehend all theſe afflictions to come from Gods wrath and indignation againſt him; the thoughts of which he was not able to bear: but therein he was wholly miſtaken, and then only hit upon the truth of his Caſe when he ſaid, *When he hath tried me, I ſhall come forth as gold,* Job 2. 10 23. 10.

*gold*, *i. e.* more pure and refined, more bright and glorious.

(4.) In the hardeſt condition good Men can be caſt into, they have more comfortable hopes towards God than other Men can have. *Job* was extremely afflicted to think the beſt Friend he had in the World, and whom he deſired to pleaſe above all things, ſhould become his Enemy, and ſet himſelf againſt him; but he did not always think ſo, although his Friends repreſented his condition to him in the blackeſt and moſt frightful manner, which ſtartled him and made him reſent his ſufferings with great bitterneſs, and expreſs it with a kind of horror; yet he ſoon recovered himſelf out of thoſe Agonies, and kept up his truſt and confidence in God. And there were two things which ſupported him under all his diſmal apprehenſions.

(1.) The reflections of a good Conſcience in the diſcharge of his duty to God and Man; and therefore he tells his Friends, after all their
Job 27. 5,6. ſharp reflections upon him, *Till I dye, I will not remove my integrity from me; my righteouſneſs I hold faſt, and will not let it go; my heart ſhall not reproach me ſo long as I live.* It was this which raiſed his Spirits, and made him ſtand his ground againſt the oppoſition of his Friends, and the ſcorn of his Enemies:

Enemies: It was this, which made him deſpiſe the meanneſs of thoſe who courted, admired, and flatter'd him in his former Greatneſs; but now deſpiſed and derided him, making him the ſubject of their raillery and entertainments: *And now I am their ſong, yea I am their by-word*; even theirs who but a little before, as he at large deſcribes it, kept their diſtance from him, made way for him as he paſſed the ſtreets, admired all he ſpoke as Oracles, and all he did as the perfection of Wiſdom and Vertue. But ſo wiſe a Man could not be ſurpriſed to ſee flattery turned into ſcorn and deriſion; (for no Man thinks to gain by his flattery, who hath not a ſecret contempt of the perſon he flatters) and ſo good a Man could not but forgive the unjuſt reproaches that were caſt upon him, as long as he had the inward ſatisfaction of his own Integrity. And therefore he gives ſo ample an account of his whole Life and Actions, both in his publick and private capacities; not to boaſt of his Vertues, but to be a juſt vindication of his Innocence under all their aſperſions; and to let them ſee, that the comfort of a good Conſcience doth not fail, when Friends do; and as the Wiſe Man ſpeaks: When *the backſliders in heart ſhall be filled with their own ways; a good man ſhall be ſatisfied from himſelf.*

Job 30. 9.

29. 7, 8, 9, 10.

Ch. 30. and 31.

Prov. 14. 14.

(2.) The expectation of a future recompence; either in this World, as he ſeemed to hope, or at leaſt in another. Some think, that
Job 19. 25. *Job* ſpake as to this Life, when he ſaid, *For I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he ſhall ſtand at the*
26. *latter day upon the Earth; And though after my skin, worms deſtroy this body, yet in my fleſh I ſhall ſee God*: and ſo the meaning of theſe Words is, though at preſent his Caſe ſeem'd deſperate, and his Life paſt hope, *the worms eating through his skin*; yet he had a ſecret hope, that God would at laſt redeem him out of his troubles, and that very loathſome Carkaſs of his would hold out ſo long as to ſee that Day. But the Chriſtian Church hath generally underſtood them to refer to the Day of *Reſurrection*, when he was certain that God would reward his innocency and ſincerity: And of a future ſtate, it is plain he had an undoubted ex-
27. 8. pectation, when he ſaith, *What is the hope of the hypocrite, although he hath gained, when God taketh away his Soul?* which ſhews the great folly of Hypocriſie, which can never ſtand a man in ſtead beyond this World, where he muſt leave all his Riches, and Honours, and Hopes, and Happineſs behind him; and the juſt expectation good Men had, that God would reward them after this life, though they were ſufferers in this. And therefore, although *Job* had ſuch dread-

dreadful apprehenſions of God at preſent; yet he had very comfortable hopes as to his future condition, when he calls God his Redeemer, even the ſame of whom he here ſaith, *When I conſider, I am afraid of him.*

(2.) But if ſo good, ſo vertuous, ſo ſincere a Man as *Job*, had ſuch terrible apprehenſions of God, what can we wretched ſinners think of him? if *when he conſidered, he was afraid of him*; have not we reaſon *when we conſider*, to ſink into deſpair? Can we appeal to God as to the ſincerity of our hearts in his fear and ſervice, as *Job* did? Can we ſay with *Job*, that *we have not gone back from the commandment of his lips, but have eſteemed the words of his mouth more than our neceſſary food*? Have we not rather caſt his moſt juſt and reaſonable commandments behind our backs, and eſteemed our vanities, our ſuperfluities, our debaucheries, our follies, *above the words of his mouth*? But if we have not deſpiſed his Laws, yet we cannot ſay, as *Job* did, that *our feet have held his ſteps, his way have we kept and not declined*; for our Conſciences cannot but condemn us for the breach of his Laws; and our ſins, our great and manifold ſins bear witneſs againſt us. What apprehenſions of God then may we entertain in our minds, when even *Job was afraid of him*? I anſwer,

(1.) None ought to look upon God as ſo terrible, as to make them deſpair.

(2.) Men ought to have different apprehenſions of God, according to the nature and continuance of their ſins.

(1.) None ought to look upon God as ſo terrible, as to make them deſpair. For when our apprehenſions of God are ſuch as drive us from him, they overthrow the great end of Religion, which is to bring God and Man nearer together. None ought to exclude themſelves from mercy, whom God hath not excluded from it; and God excludes none whom he invites to repent, with a promiſe of forgiveneſs, if they do it; and the goodneſs and long-ſuffering, and forbearance of ſinners, is on purpoſe deſign'd to lead them to Repentance. So that after all this, to deſpair, is not only to reject the mercy which God offers, but to queſtion his truth and ſincerity, to ſlight his Patience, to diſparage his Goodneſs, and to look upon him as a moſt revengeful and implacable Being; which is, to entertain moſt diſhonourable and unworthy thoughts of the beſt, the wiſeſt, the moſt merciful and compaſſionate Being in the World; who hath proclaimed himſelf to be a *God merciful and gracious, long-ſuffering, and abundant in goodneſs and truth, keeping mercy for thouſands, forgiving iniquity, tranſgreſſion and ſin,*

Exod. 34. 6, 7.

i. e. to

i. e. to all that truly repent of them. So that *when we conſider*, we have no reaſon *to be ſo afraid of him* as to deſpair.

(2.) Men ought to have different apprehenſions of God, according to the nature and continuance of their ſins. For as on the one ſide, the Scripture aſſures us, that *God knoweth our frame, and remembreth that we are duſt*; and therefore will make all juſt and reaſonable allowances for the unavoidable infirmities of Humane Nature, and all circumſtances that abate the wilfulneſs of our evil actions: ſo on the other ſide, at the ſame time when he declared his infinite goodneſs, he adds, *and that will by no means clear the guilty*; not of any kind of ſin; for then none could eſcape, ſince all have ſinned, and therefore are become guilty before him: but *the guilty* are ſuch, as add impenitency and obſtinacy to their ſins; ſuch as wilfully and preſumptuouſly, not only break, but contemn his Laws; not barely neglect their duty, but deſpiſe it; ſuch as are not meerly cold and indifferent about Religion, but are zealouſly concerned againſt it, and endeavour to expoſe it to ſcorn and contempt. For a very judicious Interpreter ſaith, This ſeverity of God here ſpoken of, *in viſiting the iniquity of the Fathers upon the Children*, &c. is not to be underſtood of all crimes, but of ſuch as immediately concern

Pſal. 103. 14.

*H. Grot.* in loc.

the

the honour of the Divine Majesty, such as Apostasie, Idolatry, and consequently Atheism and Irreligion; which is a Plot against Heaven, an attempt to dethrone the Divine Majesty, or to make his Government insignificant in the World. If faults are justly aggravated among Men, not so much from other circumstances, as from the dignity of the Person against whom they are committed, and from the tendency of them: Will not the parity of reason so far hold, as to aggravate those sins which are immediate offences against the *Divine Majesty*, and which tend to overthrow his Government of the World?

II. And so I come to the second sense of these Words, as they may be taken for *Jobs* vindication of himself from the unjust charge of his Friends, as though he were a *secret Hypocrite*, or a contemner of God and Religion, under a fair outward shew of Piety and Devotion. For, *Eliphaz* in plain terms, in the foregoing Chapter, tells him, he was one of those who thought God was at too great a distance to take notice of things upon Earth. *And thou sayest, how doth God know? can he judge through the dark Cloud? Thick Clouds are a covering to him, that he seeth not, and he walketh in the circuit of Heaven.* Which is in short, to charge him with denying the Providence of God; and reckons him with those *that said unto God, Depart*

Job 22. 13, 14.

*part from us; and what can the Almighty do for them?* Job 22. 17.
*i. e.* with ſuch as would have nothing to do with God or Religion, looking on it as a ſoppiſh uſeleſs thing: but however, he gives him good counſel to repent of his folly, and to apply himſelf yet to God; *Acquaint now thy ſelf with him, and* 21.
*be at peace, thereby good ſhall come to thee. Receive* 22.
*I pray thee the law from his mouth, and lay up his words in thine heart*: *i. e.* be perſwaded to be Religious in good earneſt, and to let the fear of God make a deep impreſſion upon your Soul, and you will find great benefit and advantage by it. *If thou* 23.
*return to the Almighty, thou ſhalt be built up, &c.*
*Job* finding his Friends ſo often letting fall expreſſions to this purpoſe, and knowing no imaginable reaſon for it, but a groundleſs ſuſpicion they had entertained, becauſe of his unuſual ſufferings, makes here in this Chapter a ſolemn proteſtation of the mighty value and eſteem he had for the Laws of God, that *he conſtantly obſerved* 23. 11, 12.
*them, and eſteemed them more than his neceſſary food.* And to let them know that this was no ſudden heat, he tells *Eliphaz*, that the fear of God in him, came from the moſt weighty and ſerious conſideration; *When I conſider, I am afraid of him*: as if he had ſaid, "I have ſpent many thoughts "about God and Religion, whether there be "any juſt reaſon for Mankind to apprehend and

"ſtand

" ſtand in awe of an infinite Being above them;
" and I do aſſure you, the more I have fixed
" my thoughts upon this matter, and laid all
" things before me, the deeper impreſſion the
" fear of God hath made upon me: or as ſome
" render it, *perpendo & paveo, I conſider, and I fear*
" *him.*

Wherein are two things implied.

I. That Mens diſeſteem of Religion doth ariſe from want of *Conſideration.*

II. That the more men *conſider*, the more ſetled and fixed will their minds be in the eſteem and practice of Religion.

I. That Mens diſeſteem of Religion doth ariſe from the want of *Conſideration.*

Which will beſt appear, by examining the moſt common and prevailing reaſons of Mens diſeſteem of it; which are chiefly theſe two;

(1.) Their looking on Religion as a matter of meer *intereſt and deſign*, without any other foundation.

(2.) The unaccountable folly and ſuperſtitious fears of Mankind; which makes them think more to be in it than really is.

(1.) Looking on the whole buſineſs of Religion as *a matter of intereſt and deſign*; firſt ſtarted by ſome great *Politicians* to tame and govern Mankind, and ever ſince kept up by a company of

*Prieſts*

*Prieſts* who lived upon the Cheat, and therefore were bound to maintain, and to keep it up; which otherwiſe would ſink to nothing.

This is the worſt can be ſaid againſt Religion; and it is bad enough of all reaſon, if it were true: and we ſhould deſerve all the ſcorn and contempt, which ſuch Men treat us with, if we were but acceſſary to ſo great a fraud and impoſture.

But is there ſuch a thing as *Reaſon* among Mankind? Can we judge of what is true and falſe; probable or improbable; certain or uncertain? Or muſt ſome things be run down, without examining? and others taken up, without any other colour of reaſon, than becauſe they ſerve to ſuch a purpoſe?

For Gods ſake, and for our own ſake then, let us *conſider* theſe things a little better, before we pronounce againſt them; or entertain any doubt or ſuſpicion of them in our minds. And there is this great reaſon for it, that the wiſeſt, the beſt, the moſt conſidering, the moſt diſintereſſed Men have taken the part of Religion, and been zealous Defenders of it; whereas on the other ſide, the younger, the looſer, the more debauched part of Mankind, have been moſt enclined to Atheiſm and Irreligion.

But if we have not *Reaſon* of our ſide, we

are content to give up the Cauſe, and to be thought *Deceivers* (which goes very hardly down with an ingenuous mind): and if on the other ſide, there be nothing found but falſe and groundleſs ſuppoſitions, or unreaſonable ſuſpicions; I hope, *Religion* may be fairly acquitted from being thought a meer contrivance of *Politicians*, and we from being *the Silver-ſmiths* to this *Diana*.

(1.) Thoſe who make Religion to be ſuch a contrivance, muſt ſuppoſe that all Mankind were once without any ſuch thing as Religion. For, if ſome crafty *Politicians* did firſt ſtart the notion of an *Inviſible Being* among the rude and unthinking Multitude, the better to awe them into Obedience to Government; then Mankind muſt have lived before thoſe *Politicians* appear'd, with as little ſenſe of God and Religion, and with as much ſecurity and eaſe, as to the thoughts of another World, as the very Beaſts that periſh. If this were true, theſe Politicians were ſo far from conſulting the intereſt of Mankind, that they were the greateſt Enemies to it; by filling their minds with ſuch unconquerable fears, as rob them of that undiſturbed Tranquillity which they enjoyed before. But when and where did this race of Mankind live, whom theſe deſigning Men firſt cheated into the belief

of

of a Deity, and the practice of Religion? The eldeſt Writings in the World, without all diſpute, are thoſe of the Holy Scriptures; and among theſe, the Book of *Job* hath been thought the moſt antient; for in all this Book we have not one word of the Law of *Moſes*, or of Circumciſion; which makes it very probable to have been written before the Children of *Iſraels* coming out of *Ægypt*; (and ſome *Arabic* Writers think that *Job* lived before *Abraham*; and others, at leaſt in the time of *Jacob*) however it be, this Book of *Job* gives an account of the ſenſe of Mankind about Religion very early; and by it we find that the great, and wiſe, and underſtanding Men of the World, ſuch as *Job* and his three Friends were, (who as far as appears by the ſtory, were all of them independent Princes; ſuch as were common then, and a long time after, in thoſe parts about *Arabia*) had a mighty ſenſe of God and Providence, and the Duties of Religion upon their minds. And they not only give an ample Teſtimony as to their own times, but they appeal to all the Traditions of former times; *Enquire I pray thee, of the former Age*, ſaith one of *Job*'s Friends, *and prepare thy ſelf to the ſearch of their Fathers. For we are but of yeſterday, and know nothing.* But what is it he appeals to Antiquity for, and the obſervations of all former Ages? It was for this, *viz.* the bad con-

*Greg. Abulfarai. hiſt. Dynaſt.* p. 13. *Hier. Trad. Hebr. in Gen.* 22.

Job 8. 8.

dition of all that were not ſincere in Religion:
Job 8. 13. *So are the paths of all that forget God, and the hypocrites hope ſhall periſh.* And another of his Friends ſpeaking of the remarkable judgments of God
22. 15, upon the World, ſaith to *Job*, *Haſt thou marked*
16. *the old way which wicked men have trodden; which were cut down out of time, whoſe foundation was overthrown with a flood? i. e.* the Men of the old World. And what was their great and provoking ſin? A contempt of God and Religion,
17. *Which ſaid unto God, Depart from us; and what can the Almighty do for them?* This is the oldeſt, and trueſt, and ſevereſt inſtance of ſuch a profane and irreligious temper, and the great miſchief it brought upon the World; which ſhews, that this is not the original diſpoſition of Mankind, but the monſtrous degeneracy of it. But if they are unſatisfied with the Teſtimony of *Job*'s Friends, let them produce any to be mentioned the ſame Day with it, which can pretend to give a truer account of the Religion of the firſt Ages of the World: I do not mention *Moſes* (although his Authority be unqueſtionable) leſt he ſhould be thought one of theſe *Politicians*, who inſpired the People of *Iſrael* with the Principles of Religion; but I the rather chuſe this inſtance of the free Princes of thoſe parts of the Eaſt, who were under ſubjection to no common Authority,

thority, yet were ſo early poſſeſſed themſelves with ſuch firm Principles of Religion, and aſſure us that all good Men had the ſame; and that they were ſlighted by none, but ſuch looſe and profane wretches, whom God ſet up for the Monuments of his Indignation.

(2.) Suppoſe we ſhould allow that in a particular Nation, ſome great and wiſe Man ſhould think fit to reclaim a looſe and barbarous People by the Principles of Religion; how doth this prove Religion to be falſe, or what doth it ſignifie to the univerſal conſent of Mankind? Is it any Argument that there is no foundation in Nature for Juſtice, Charity, and common Humanity, becauſe wiſe Men have been put to uſe variety of methods to reduce Canibals to civility? And it would be as good arguing againſt all Morality from thence, as againſt Religion, becauſe it was judged by wiſe Men a neceſſary inſtrument to civilize Mankind. And as far as I can obſerve, Religion and Civility have riſen and ſunk together. The Roman Orator made a bold Challenge, as to the then known World, to name any Nation *ſo barbarous, that they had no Religion among them.* And although the Romans knew but little of the habitable World in compariſon of what is now known; yet upon the whole matter, the new diſcoveries add force

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and ſtrength to the Argument; onely with annexing this obſervation, That the more improved and civilized any People have been, the more regard they have had to Religion; the more ignorant, ſottiſh, and barbarous they were, although they were not wholly without Religion, yet it was in leſs eſteem and honour among them: and this obſervation will hold, as to all the Nations ſince diſcovered both in the Eaſt and Weſt-Indies. But what a mighty number of *Politicians* muſt ſpring out of the Earth at once, to ſcatter *the ſeeds of Religion*, in ſuch a manner, over all the face of the Earth? It is impoſſible that a few Men, though never ſo ſubtle, never ſo experienced, ſhould be able to captivate all Mankind in ſo great a variety of Language, and diſtance of Countries. And ſuch an univerſal effect muſt have ſome common and univerſal Cauſe; which the invention of a few crafty Men could never be.

(3.) But ſuppoſe this to have happened in ſome one unlucky Age, when the Earth brought forth ſuch a fruitful crop of *Politicians*; yet how comes it to paſs, ſince theſe have ſo long been laid in their Graves, the effect of this Policy ſhould ſtill remain all the World over? For, every Age is apt to condemn the Policy of the foregoing; and whether the Men of the preſent

ſent Age ſtand upon the ſhoulders of the precedent or not, they are very apt to think they ſee farther than they; how comes it then in ſo many Ages, as have paſſed ſince theſe deep *Politicians* lived, that no other Perſons have been able to lay open the artifice of Religion ſo, as to free Mankind from the pretended ſlavery of it? It cannot be ſaid, *that there were none to attempt it*; for that were to own an abſolute conſent of all Mankind as to Religion. And we know there were ſome once at *Athens*, who ſet up with a deſign to overthrow Religion; but with ſo very little ſucceſs, whatever the Roman Poet boaſts, that they were fain to be very private in their meetings: and the City was ſo little moved with their Diſcourſes, that S. *Paul* ſaith, *the Men of Athens, were in all things too ſuperſtitious.* Act. 17. 22. It cannot be ſaid, *that there were none ready to joyn in ſuch a deſign*; for all bad Men had rather there were no Religion at all; and their number is never ſmall, and never unwilling to carry it on: How comes it then after all, that Religion ſtill prevailed, and the fears of a Deity could not be ſhaken off, no not by the greateſt *Politicians* themſelves, who thought they underſtood all the arts of Government, as well as any that had been before them? Would not ſome of the Roman Emperours, who had none to controul them,

have

have been glad to have eaſed themſelves of the fears of an inviſible Power? But they found, after all their ſtrugglings, it was a thing not to be done; God and Conſcience were ſo much too hard for their looſe reaſonings ſet up againſt them, that where Men had ſhaken off the love of Religion, they could not ſhake off the fears that follow the contempt of it. But where Mankind have been impoſed upon, when once the cheat is diſcovered, all its force is for ever loſt: for Men do not love to be deceived, eſpecially in matters that ſo very nearly concern them; ſo that if Religion had been a trick of ſo long ſtanding, aſſuredly it would have been hooted out of the World long ago; and nothing would have been ſo ridiculous as to pretend to it. But thanks be to God, the credit of Religion is not yet worn out of the World; which can be owing to nothing but to thoſe invincible Reaſons, on which it ſtands. For there hath wanted nothing of wit or malice in profane Perſons, to undermine and blow up the reputation of it. But the foundations on which it is built, are ſo firm and ſtable, and have endured the violent ſhocks, and ſecret attempts of ſo many Ages, that as long as reaſon and civility hold up in the World, we need not queſtion but Religion will. If once I begin to ſee Mankind caſt off all the

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reins of Civil Government, and run wild and ſavage, quitting all the conveniences and pleaſures of Houſes, and Lands, and Cloths, to live naked in the Woods, and to feed on Roots and Acorns, becauſe they ſuſpect that all Civil Government, was a crafty deſign of ſome cunning Men to get above others; I may then begin to think that ſuch ſuſpicions about Religion, may prevail upon Mankind to caſt off the moſt reaſonable obligations to maintain the profeſſion and the practice of it. For although the Reaſons on which Religion is grounded, be independent on Civil Authority, ſuch as the train of Cauſes, the Motion, Order, Beauty, uſefulneſs of all the parts of the Univerſe; which remain the ſame in all Ages, and under all Revolutions: yet the Principles of Religion do really give ſo much ſtrength and ſupport to Civil Government, that none who have a kindneſs to the one, can be Enemies to the other; and they who ſuſpect Religion to be an Impoſture, will be as ready to ſuſpect all Government to be no better: the conſequence whereof will be nothing but Barbariſm and Confuſion.

(2.) But it may be ſaid, that although the Principles of Religion in general, are reaſonable enough in themſelves; and the things we obſerve in the World, do naturally lead Men to

own a Deity; yet when they reflect on the ſtrange *folly* and *ſuperſtitious fear* of Mankind, they are apt ſtill to ſuſpect, that Men being puzled and confounded, have frighted themſelves into the belief of Inviſible Powers, and performing Acts of Worſhip and Devotion to them, as appears by ſo many imaginary Deities among the Heathen; and the ſuperſtitions which ſtill prevail on ſo great a part of the World. But this way of reaſoning is juſt as if a Man ſhould argue that there is no ſuch thing as true Reaſon in Mankind, becauſe imagination is a wild, extravagant, unreaſonable thing; or that we never ſee any thing when we are awake, becauſe in our Dreams we fanſie we ſee things which we do not. We cannot deny the follies of Mankind about Religion, either Ancient or Modern: but when was it given to all the World to be wiſe? It were extremely to be wiſhed, that nothing but pure and undefiled Religion ſhould obtain in the World; or at leaſt, that the Chriſtian World were purged from the follies of Enthuſiaſm and Superſtition. But alas! the more we conſider all the wilful errors, and involuntary miſtakes, vicious Inclinations, violent Paſſions, fooliſh Opinions, ſtrange Prejudices, ſuperficial Reaſonings, and obſtinate Reſolutions which are incident to Mankind, we

ſhall

ſhall ſee greater reaſon to wonder, that there is ſo much true Religion in the World, than that there is no more. Nothing but the ſtrong impreſſion God hath made of himſelf on the Souls of Men; nothing but a Divine Hand could have kept ſuch a flame alive, in the midſt of ſo many contrary Winds of Mens different Paſſions and Intereſts, and ſuch a rough and tempeſtuous Sea, as the ſtate of this World hath generally been with reſpect to true Religion. But if through the mercy of God it fares better among us, as to outward circumſtances (for which we ought to be very thankful) let not Religion bear the blame of all the follies and indiſcretions of thoſe who profeſs it. It is a hard Caſe, if the common weakneſſes of Humane Nature, and thoſe faults which Men commit through the want of Religion, ſhall be laid to the charge of it. But nothing is more apt to incline Men of better underſtandings, to ill thoughts of Religion, than to ſee it made uſe of, to ſerve bad purpoſes and deſigns, to cover ambitious projects; and to draw in People the more eaſily into Faction and Rebellion; and while they look on this ſide of the Picture, and ſee there nothing but the lamentable ſpectacles of the miſchiefs which have been done in the World under the pretence of Religion, they are far from thinking thoſe *Politicians*,

that invented it; it being ſo eaſily turned upon the Government, and being then ſo dangerous to it. (Which is a farther Argument to me, that it could not be a contrivance of ſuch Men: for then there would have been no other Scheme of Religion owned in the World, but that of the *Leviathan*, which being ſo great a Novelty, it is a certain ſign, that Religion was not framed meerly to ſerve the ends of Government.) But however, that only true and holy Religion which we profeſs, is ſo far from giving any encouragement to ſeditious Practices, that it is not poſſible to contrive a Religion, which we muſt adhere to whatever we ſuffer for it, that ſhould more effectually recommend the Duties of Quietneſs, Patience, and ſubmiſſion to Authority, than the genuine Religion of our Saviour doth. As long therefore as the Rules of our Religion are ſo plain and eaſie, ſo reaſonable, ſo uſeful and beneficial to Mankind, we ought not to leſſen our eſteem of it, for the ſake of any weak, or ſuperſtitious, or hypocritical pretenders to it.

II. Having thus far ſhewed, that Mens diſeſteem of Religion comes from the want of *Conſideration*, I now come to the laſt thing I deſigned, as the *Application* of the reſt, *viz.* That the more Men do conſider, the more they will eſteem

eſteem Religion, and apply themſelves to the practice of it.

And now methinks, I may with greater aſſurance addreſs my ſelf to all ſorts of Perſons, ſince all that I ſhall requeſt, will lie in two very reaſonable things,

1. To *conſider* impartially what is fit for them to do in Religion.

2. To practiſe ſo much of Religion, as upon *Conſideration* will appear fitting to be done.

(1.) To conſider impartially what is fit for them to do in Religion. I am not going about to perſwade you to leave your Eſtates and Imployments, and to retire your ſelves from the World, and to give up your ſelves wholly to Devotion. For I do not deny but that they who ſerve their Prince and their Country, and follow their lawful Imployments, with an honeſt and conſcientious diligence, and neglect no neceſſary Duties of Religion, do carry on the great ends of Religion, as well as thoſe, whoſe time and occaſions will give them leave to devote themſelves more to Faſting and Prayer. But let none think the matters of Religion to belong to others, and that they have buſineſs of another nature to attend upon, as though paying their duty to God, were fit only

ly for thoſe who had nothing elſe to do. While *Job* was in the height of his Proſperity, and was
Job 1. 3. *the greateſt of all the men of the Eaſt*; he tells his Friends how much he was employed in doing all the good he could by works of Juſtice and
9. 12, &c. Charity; *He was eyes to the blind, and feet to the lame, and a father to the poor: and the cauſe which he knew*
1. 13, &c. *not, he ſearched out*; yet *he eſteemed the words of Gods mouth*, or the means whereby his Duty was
23. 12. made known to him, *more than his neceſſary food*;
1. 5. he had his ſet times of *offering ſacrifice and prayer*
16. 17. *to God*; and upon extraordinary occaſions, he required his Children to prepare themſelves for the ſolemn Sacrifice by Faſting and Prayer;
1. 5. which is meant *by ſanctifying them.* So that not only conſtant Offices of Religion, but more ſolemn Acts of Devotion at certain ſeaſons, are not only agreeable to the antient practice of the Chriſtian Church, but to the moſt antient Principles of natural Religion, as they were underſtood and practiſed in the time of *Job*; who was ſo great a Perſon in Gods eſteem, that himſelf, who knew him beſt, gave that Character of him, *That there was none like him upon earth*; and therefore we cannot follow a better Example.

(2.) Let us then ſet our ſelves to practiſe all the known Duties of our Religion, and the more

more we conſider theſe things, we ſhall be more reſolved to do it.

(1.) That God infinitely deſerves from us all the ſervice we can do him.

(2.) That we cannot ſerve our ſelves better, than by faithfully ſerving him.

(1.) That God infinitely deſerves from us all the ſervice we can do him. *Can a man*, ſaith *Eliphaz*, *be profitable to God, as he that is wiſe may be profitable to himſelf?* *i. e.* he cannot: but yet if God expects and requires ſuch ſervice from us, we have no reaſon to enquire farther; for we are certain all we can do, falls infinitely ſhort of the obligations he hath laid upon us. For let us *conſider*, Was it not God who formed us in our Mothers Womb, and ſo curiouſly framed and faſhioned all the parts of our Bodies? Was it not He, that breathed into us the breath of Life, that firſt ſet the *Wheel* in motion by the courſe of the Blood, and ſetled the *Ciſtern* in the Heart to receive and diſperſe it, and the *Pitcher at the fountain*, to take it at its return from the Veins? Was it not He, that fixed the *golden Bowl* in the Head that covers the Brain, and ſtretched out the *ſilver Cord* of the Nerves over the whole Body, for the admirable uſe and ſervice of all the Parts? Was it not He, that endued us with thoſe noble Faculties of Underſtanding, Reaſoning, Reflecting,

Job 22. 2.

Eccl. 12. 6.

Reflecting, Remembring, Diſcourſing with others, and Governing our ſelves? Was it not He, that made all the Parts of the World about us ſo ſerviceable and beneficial to us? Was it not He, that preſerved us from ſo many and great Dangers which we have been expoſed to by open Violence, and ſecret Conſpiracies; by Fire, and Sword, and Plague; by ſtorms at Sea, and upon Land too? Was it not He, that hath ſo often ſcatter'd the Clouds, that threatned us, when the face of the Heavens gathered blackneſs, and all things ſeemed to tend to confuſion? Is it not He, who ſtill wonderfully continues our Peace and Plenty, amidſt all the ſad complaints, and miſerable condition of our Neighbours? yea, who continues our Laws, our Government, our Religion amidſt all the Fears and Conſpiracies which have been among us? And ſhall we think much to ſerve ſo Wiſe, ſo Merciful, ſo Gracious a God? Is it not He, that hath exerciſed ſo much patience, and long-ſuffering, and goodneſs towards us in order to our Repentance? That ſtill offers to us the moſt unvaluable Bleſſings of the pardon of our Sins, and everlaſting Happineſs upon our ſincere Repentance? Yea, is it not He, that hath given his own Son to dye for our Sins, and expoſed him to the Reproach and Pain of an accurſed Death upon the Croſs,

that

that he might be a Sacrifice of Atonement for us? And will not all theſe Motives prevail with us to fear and ſerve him, who hath deſerved ſo much more from us, than the ſervice of our whole Lives, in the moſt perfect Obedience, would make a requital for? Shall we then grudge him that proportion of ſincere Obedience, which he is not only willing to accept of, but hath promiſed to reward with a Crown of everlaſting Glory? Which is the laſt thing to be conſidered.

(2.) That in ſerving God faithfully, we do moſt effectually ſerve our ſelves, and promote our own Intereſt. *Men will praiſe thee*, ſaith the *Pſalmiſt*, *when thou doſt well to thy ſelf.* Not, when thou pampereſt thy Body, and thereby layeſt a foundation for Luſts and Diſeaſes; not, when thou *heapeſt up Riches, and knoweſt not who ſhall gather them*; not, when thou giveſt way to all the Vanities and Follies of a deceitful World: but when thou takeſt a juſt care of thy true and laſting Intereſt. For as *Job* ſaith, *God* looked on this as the proper Wiſdom of Mankind, *Unto Man he ſaid, The fear of the Lord is Wiſdom, and to depart from evil is underſtanding.* And that is certainly our true Wiſdom, whereby, we ſecure our beſt Friend in all conditions, we diſappoint our greateſt

Pſal. 49. 18.

Job 28. 28.

Enemies, we lay the ſureſt foundation for Peace and Tranquillity in our Minds while we live, and a Bleſſed Eternity when we dye. To which God of his Infinite Mercy bring us.

*FINIS.*